Morgan, "Inveterate Escaper," Was a Pest to His Confederate Guards

Colonel Charles Henry Morgan, Veteran Congressman from Missouri, Had Only One Idea When a Prisoner of War and That Was, "What's the Way Out?"

Tunnels, Holes Cut in Freight Cars, Bluffs and Daring All Served at Times in Effecting His Release from Durance for Greater or Less Intervals.

By JAMES B. MORROW.

HUNGRY men, barefooted and in shreds, said that Charley Morgan had "escape on the brain."

"But that was not so," Colonel Morgan explained to me as he strode back and forth across his office. "Escaping had become my business, and I just worked at it as I would have worked at anything else."

The first flight was from Libby, by the famous tunnel through a stone wall and under a street. Twice afterward he cut a hole in the floor of the freight car in which he was riding, and dropped to the railroad track beneath. Once he walked past the guards, bluffing his way to freedom by saying he was a workman instead of a Yankee in restraint. At another time he simply vanished and after a day was caught in the woods.

On the fifth attempt he got away for good. That night he slept in Sherman's camp. He was in the army, and not far distant when Beauregard whipped McDowell in the first battle at Bull Run. He was a private soldier then. In 1865, a captain of infantry for gallantry in action, he marched in the grand review before the President.

"Company H, of the 21st Wisconsin," he said, stopping his tramp back and forth across his office, "cut to pieces by Confederate bullets, only the bare bones of what it had been, contained the best fighting men on earth when it swept past the White House on that last day before disbanding—as did every other company of lean and hardy veterans in the opinion of its own commander."

After a year of intermittent persuasion, Colonel Charles Henry Morgan, of Joplin, Representative in Congress from the 15th Missouri District, was telling me the story of his life as a soldier. Even then, there was a stipulation—the article was not to be printed until Congress had adjourned and he had gone back to his coal and zinc mines in Missouri.

"I would rather lose $5,000 than to have my colleagues think that I bragged to you about my military experiences," he said, in plainly evident integrity.

At the call for troops in 1861 Morgan was a student at the Fond du Lac High School. He enlisted in the 1st Regiment of Infantry. Before he was twenty-two he had escaped five times from prison and had fought in eleven pitched battles and engagements. He puts no embroidery of woe or heroics into his narrative—it is thrilling enough in simple facts—but laughs at his hardships, at his shoeless feet and the rags that clothed his starved and miserable body. During the war with Spain he was lieutenant colonel of the 5th Missouri Infantry.

STORY OF FIRST CAPTURE.

"I was captured the first time at Perrysville, Ky., thirty-nine miles from Frankfort," he said, stamping up and down with energy. "That was in October, 1862. Buell commanded the Federals and Bragg the Confederates. My regiment, the 21st Wisconsin, was brought from the rear at double quick.

"Our men were falling back when we reached the battlefield. Before we got into line they came down upon us like a drove of runaway cattle. Several of them actually crawled between my legs, on their hands and knees. We checked the enemy, but gave ground later, only to learn that we were surrounded. So we were made prisoners. I was then a lieutenant. After my capture I saw the old 1st Wisconsin charge the Confederates. When I heard the shouts of my former comrades I wished I were a private with them instead of a second lieutenant in the custody of the enemy.

"I was paroled and sent North. In a short time I was exchanged, and by the laws of war was free to fight again. I joined my regiment at Murfreesboro, Tenn., immediately after the battle of Stone River. Thomas was my corps commander. His corps contained the cream of the fighting men then on earth. No finer body of soldiers has ever lived in ancient or modern history.

"I was present at the battle of Chickamauga, fought out between Rosecrans and Bragg. One hundred thousand men were engaged, a third of whom were lost—killed, wounded or taken prisoners. Rosecrans was defeated. However, he left his bayonet sticking in the enemy. 'It seems to me,' General Daniel H. Hill, a Confederate corps commander, said, 'that the elan of the Southern soldier was never seen after Chickamauga. That barren victory sealed the fate of the Southern Confederacy.'

"It was my bloody battle," Colonel Morgan went on to say. "On the second day we were ordered back, and marched right into the enemy. We were getting fire from both directions—in front and to the rear—and my regiment surrendered. The colonel, Harrison C. Hobart, was taken with the rest. We reached Libby prison in October, 1863. Formerly it had been a tobacco warehouse. I was sent to the top floor. All of my fellow prisoners, like myself, were officers. They were young, resourceful and daring men. Some were lawyers, some were civil engineers and some were mechanics of great ability.

"Instantly we began to think of escape. There were guards in the building and on the outside. We organized debating clubs and literary societies to kill time. Several dramatic entertainments were given, including a minstrel show with original jokes. We also played whist and had sword exercises to keep in physical condition for the day when we should escape and get safely away by using our legs.

"'The Commentaries of Blackstone,' in two volumes, came to Colonel Hobart from the North. He was a lawyer. I studied Blackstone, as did others. Hobart was our preceptor. Books were also received and we never lacked literature of one kind or another. Boxes from home reached us occasionally. If they contained food it was only a mouthful for each of one's friends when equally distributed. Shoes were sent to me, but I did not get them. Once a week we had a piece of meat about half the size of a man's hand. We were hungry all the time and were dressed in rags.

"A whisper went around in January, 1864, that a tunnel was being dug. Those of us who were upstairs could not learn anything definite. Early in February we were told that the tunnel had been completed. Persons who have heard of that remarkable piece of engineering work will remember it was conceived and carried out by Colonel Thomas E. Rose, of Pennsylvania, assisted by Major Archibald G. Hamilton, of the 12th Kentucky Cavalry. All the tools they had were a broken penknife and an old chisel. Their time for work was from 10 o'clock at night until 4 o'clock in the morning.

"With many others, Rose and Hamilton were imprisoned in a large room on the ground floor of the warehouse. They dug into the wall of the fireplace, going down about eighteen inches to the ceiling of a storage room in the basement. There was a drop of eight feet from the hole in the ceiling to the earth floor of the basement, which was dark at one end and filled with boxes and rubbish.

"WHILE I WAS CREEPING THROUGH THE TUNNEL THE HEAD OF ANOTHER MAN WOULD OCCASIONALLY TOUCH MY FEET"

"WE STOOD ON OUR NAKED FEET AND SAW A PARTY OF SOLDIERS ON HORSEBACK"

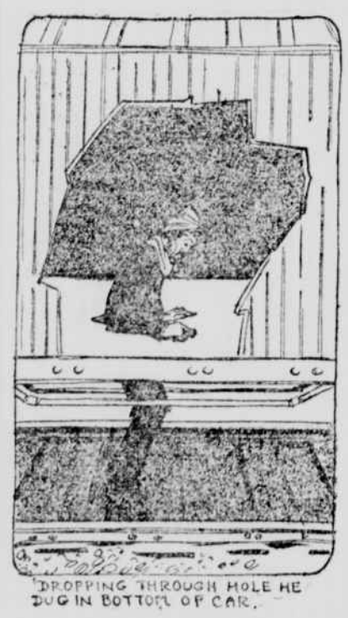
"The tunnel began in the basement and went through a stone wall and under a street to an old building fifty feet away. The digging was done by Rose, Hamilton and fifteen other men. All of the dirt was piled in the dark part of the cellar and under the boxes and refuse. After the diggers left the large room upstairs each night, the bricks were put back in the fireplace and the joints rubbed with soap and ashes.

"Three of us agreed that when the break came we should go together. One man, however, did not get away. William L. Watson, of New York, therefore, was my only companion. We had planned our flight and reasoned out the details to our own satisfaction. All the escaping prisoners, we thought, would leave Richmond and travel toward Williamsburg, forty-eight miles distant. So we determined to steal a boat, cross the James River, and make our way to the coast, hiding by day and walking at night.

"When I was creeping through the tunnel, on the night of February 9, the head of another man would occasionally touch my feet. He was Lieutenant Frank Moran. Neither Watson nor I was acquainted with him, but coming out of the tunnel, one after the other, was all the introduction we needed. Moran, a very intelligent man, argued us out of our plans, and, to our sorrow later, we changed our course and followed him. We walked straight through Richmond. It was then about 3 o'clock in the morning. A good many Confederate soldiers were passed with fear and trembling. Watson pretended to be drunk, and Moran and I acted as if we were taking him home, whistling 'Dixie' and other Southern tunes to increase the deception.

"THE MAN WHO COULDN'T SWIM GOT THERE FIRST."

"ORGANIZED DEBATING CLUBS AND LITERARY SOCIETIES TO KILL TIME."



DROPPING THROUGH HOLE HE DUG IN BOTTOM OF CAR.

"It was almost daylight when we ran into the picket line outside the city. Soldiers were on the ground at a fire. They seemed to be asleep. Maybe they were. However, we crept off on all fours and crossed the line further away, still crawling on the ground and looking, I suppose, like animals. At the break of day we hid in a briar thicket, some distance from the road. During the morning we heard men hunting in the woods. We knew the home guard would be sent to beat the brush, but we were so deep in the thicket that we thought we were safe.

"Early in the afternoon a party of soldiers passed so near that we could see their legs through the bare stems of the bushes. A second party discovered us two or three hours later. They had been told in Richmond that we were desperate men and were armed with revolvers. So they passed on, but came back just before dark re-enforced in number. A dozen or fifteen loaded muskets were stuck into our faces and we surrendered.

"That night we were kept under guard. The next day we were marched into Richmond. The streets were crowded with women and children to see the return of the Yankees, all dangerous men, it was said. Of the 109 prisoners who crept through the tunnel, fifty were recaptured. Moran, Watson and I were put into a cell underground. Inside of two hours we were in communication with the prisoners above by means of a quickly bored hole in the ceiling. Notes were sent back and forth and all the news of the prison was thus passed from cellar to garret. One day a guard came to the door and said: 'Six men out.' I was near at hand. Watson, back in the cell, came to the front with a rush. Life in the dungeon with us was over.

"Three months later we set off for the prison at Macon, Ga. We travelled in boxcars, sixteen to the train. Guards were inside the cars and on top. Much time was spent on sidetracks and at stations waiting for orders. Prisoners accumulate a good deal of junk. Having nothing but what is on their backs, and very little of that, the smallest thing they can pick up is of value. A rusty nail becomes of large prospective importance.

"Carrying all we had on to the cars, we looked like a caravan of beggars. Before the train was fairly out of Richmond some of us were slowly digging a hole through the bottom of the car, while our associates sat on the floor near the guards and played cards to conceal our operations. In the mean time holes were being made in every other car of the train.

"When we stopped, late one night, at Milan Junction, in Georgia, I went through the hole. A thrill passed up and down my body as my feet touched free ground. I kept under the edge of the car, bending over and going toward the engine as fast as possible, on the theory that if I could get to the head of the train before it started, and lie down on the ends of the ties, as near to the rail as was safe, I would not be discovered when the last car passed the spot where I was hiding. The theory worked out perfectly.

"After the train had disappeared in the darkness I got up and looked around. Nobody was in sight. In a few minutes, however, I met two other prisoners. Strange as it may seem, I have forgotten their names. I didn't investigate any further. Three were enough in that sort of an adventure. One night we walked forty miles. We buried ourselves in the woods during the daytime. Once, followed by dogs and men on horseback, we reached a deep, swift river. Two of us could swim. The other man, a Union soldier from North Carolina, couldn't, but he plunged in just the same. We helped him all we could. It seemed to me he was on the bottom most of the time. He not only got across, but he beat me and the other fellow, and was shaking the water out of his clothes when we climbed the bank of the river.

"We were often compelled to wade creeks for considerable distances to fool the dogs that were following us. The food we ate was obtained from negroes.

"At 9 o'clock one night I left my companions in the woods and went to a cluster of cabins on a large plantation. I secreted myself near a door. By and by a negro came out into the open. His name was Horace. He promised to get us something to eat, and I foolishly agreed to meet him in a corner of a field, instead of the timber, where we belonged and should have remained. The negro had to be careful, and we lay on the ground for a long while waiting. Presently somebody appeared, but he was another slave and not our friend Horace. While we were talking to him and explaining we heard some one say: 'Surrender.'

"Looking around, we saw a man covering us with an army revolver. The negro ran away. We argued with the man for some time. He had been slightly wounded and sent home, and, being a miller, was grinding corn for the Confederate army. Hearing us talking in the field, having just come from his work, he had slipped up behind us and made us prisoners.

"'I shall kill you,' he said, 'if you try to run away.'

"We told him he could shoot one of us without doubt, but that the two of us remaining would then shoot him with his own revolver. After arguing the matter up and down, we let him march us to a house. Next day we were taken to Augusta and put in jail. Thence we were sent to Macon, where we met the fellow prisoners whom we had left at Milan Junction. They had ridden, you see, while we had walked. That was the only difference.

"At Macon we went instantly to work. We had three artistic tunnels under way when a traitor among us told the guards. By that time I had become an inveterate escaper. On the Fourth of July about eight hundred of us were taken to Charleston, S. C., and placed on the waterfront. The commander of the Federal fleet was then notified that if he bombarded the city he would probably kill several hundred officers of the Union army.

"On the way to Charleston we organized the most glorious exploit of the war. We even choose a colonel, but he backed out at the last minute, declining to assume responsibility for the lives that were sure to be lost. Our purpose was to disarm the inside guards, fight the outside guards, cut the railroad and telegraph line, surprise and capture the nearest Confederate fortification and then notify our warships off the coast of what had been done.

"I had yellow fever while at Charleston. No attempt at escape was made there. After being sent to Columbia, S. C., I got away twice. The first time I was out only a day and was caught in the woods at night. The next time Captain M. R. Baldwin, of the 2d Wisconsin; Milton Ewing, captain of my own company, and myself told the guards we had been detailed to get firewood. Baldwin and I afterward served together in Congress.

"That night we met at a rendezvous in the forest agreed upon several days in advance. We hoped to reach the seacoast and signal one of our vessels on blockade duty. The third night Ewing, who was ill and weak, delayed us. At daylight we found that we were in an open country of plantations. Negroes saw us and soldiers came and took us to the county jail at Warren. From there we went to Columbia, where we began two tunnels. Sherman's army was approaching, so we were quickly loaded on cars and started toward Savannah.

"Deep in the night of February 14, 1865, I again went through a hole in the floor of a freight car. I had been in prison many months and was much reduced in strength. The night was bitterly cold and a sleet storm was covering everything with ice. My feet were wrapped in rags and my clothing was in tatters. The night was so rough that I was the only man in my car to take the chance. I ran forward, just as I did at Milan Junction, lay on the ties and the train passed. I joined four men who had escaped from other cars. One of them was Honeycup, of East Tennessee, and another was Beck, from I don't know where. All were strangers to me.

"THE FOOD WE ATE WAS OBTAINED FROM NEGROES"

"We walked along the railroad in the sleet and wind, and I increased my pain and misery by falling into a cattle guard. Soon after that I gave out. I was frozen to the bone. We saw a light and found a cabin. The negroes took us in, warmed and fed us and hid us in the woods. We remained in the neighborhood several days, and then the negroes guided us to a slashing far back in the forest. We slept on the ground, lying close together to keep warm. The smoke of Columbia, which was burning, drifted across the sky, and we understood that Sherman was in the vicinity.

"The sixth day we heard firing. On Sunday as many as fifty negroes visited us. Not one of them betrayed us to the enemy; but we ran out of food. Honeycup went one way and I went another. I heard the tramp of troops, the roll of wagons and hoof beats of horses. I slipped down into a tangle of dead weeds and underbrush. When the Confederates were passing I tried to catch something that was said. 'They'll be here about tomorrow,' was all that I heard, but it was enough. I knew that the Yankees were meant. We had told the negroes to bring Union soldiers to us if any appeared. On Washington Birthday a colored man came through the woods, saying: 'Rise, men, rise; your friends are here.'

"We stood on our naked feet and saw a party of soldiers on horseback. They belonged to the 11th Missouri. They took us up behind them and that night we slept under blankets in Sherman's camp. I marched with the Fourteenth Army Corps for some time, but I was ill and the surgeons sent me home. In thirty days I reported to my colonel near Richmond. While a prisoner, I was made a captain. A little later, I marched in the grand review.

"One man was recommended from each brigade for a commission in the regular army. I was named, but I went to Albany, and was graduated from the law school in that city. I practised in Southwestern Missouri until 1884, when I went into coal and zinc mining. I never struck it rich, however, but I make no complaint on that score. In 1874 I was elected to Congress. Only Speaker Cannon and myself remain of all the men who served with us in the House of Representatives that met thirty-six years ago last December."

COLONEL CHARLES HENRY MORGAN.
Representative in the last Congress from Missouri.

"BY PRETENDING TO BE DRUNK, A GOOD MANY CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS WERE PASSED"

"LOOKING AROUND WE SAW A MAN COVERING US WITH AN ARMY REVOLVER."

New Campaign to Save Irish Tongue

Continued from second page.

sion is made to some place of historic interest in the neighborhood of Dublin. Combined with this, there is also an industrial exhibition of Irish goods.

An interesting change has taken place within the last ten years in connection with the various industries of Ireland. The older people, who have joined the league, but who have not the time to study the language, have adopted the motto "Support Irish Industry," with the result that now nearly all Irish manufactures bear the Irish trademark, which has been granted to the Irish Industrial Development Association and which is a guarantee against the many spuriously marked "Irish made" goods palmed off on the Irish people for years.

In addition to the ard-fheis, there are lesser feisanenna held all over Ireland, varying from the provincial feis, which is often on as large a scale as the oireachtas itself, down to the little village gathering at which local talent is displayed.

The money which supports this organization is obtained, in Ireland, principally from the "Irish language week" collection, which is the name given to the week in which St. Patrick's Day falls. At that time every effort is made to secure a large amount of money. Posters are pasted on walls calling on the people to contribute; collectors stand with boxes outside the churches on Sunday; handbills are distributed, houses are visited and other means resorted to. All of the work in connection with this collection is given gratuitously.

The work which the Gaelic League has done within the last few years has won approbation from many sources. During the time he was President Theodore Roosevelt said that he hoped "that an earnest effort will be made to endow chairs in American universities for the study of Celtic literature and for research in Celtic antiquities."

GAELIC IN AMERICAN COLLEGES

While that has not come to pass in a very great degree, there are now four universities in which there are at least Celtic departments. It is to Harvard University that the honor of being first in that field belongs. It started the movement a good many years ago with the establishment of a department of Celtic.

Then came the Catholic University, at Washington. This, while being the second in the movement in one sense, was the first to establish a chair of Celtic. The credit of establishing this chair belongs to the Ancient Order of Hibernians, as they did so in 1896. The present holder of the chair is Dr. Joseph Dunn, while the president of the Washington Gaelic Society is Monsignor Shahan, a member of the faculty of the same university.

"There is also at the Catholic University," said Patrick J. Haltigan, editor of "The National Hibernian," the official paper of the order, "a Hibernian scholarship that pays $250 a year for four years. It is awarded competitively, and the successful candidate must study Gaelic as one of his subjects."

Following close upon the heels of the Catholic University came Columbia University, of New York City, which established a department of Celtic. Then a comparatively short while ago the University of California established a department of Gaelic.

Professor F. N. Robinson, of Harvard University, says that "the study of old and middle Irish cannot be disconnected from that of the modern Gaelic dialect, both in Ireland and Scotland, and I see with the greatest pleasure the revival among Irishmen of interest in their national speech."

From the pen of Matthew Arnold came as pretty a compliment as could be wished for. He wrote: "If I were asked where English poetry got these three things, its turn for style, its turn for melancholy and its turn for natural magic, for catching and rendering the charms of nature in a wonderfully near and vivid way, I should answer, with some doubt, that it got much of its turn for style from a Celtic source; with less doubt, that it got much of its turn for melancholy from a Celtic source, and, with no doubt at all, that from a Celtic source it got nearly all its natural magic."

"I should be very sorry if the Irish language should die out," says Professor Holger Pedersen of the University of Copenhagen, "for thereby Irishmen would lose their own nationality and become Englishmen; for as soon as the Irish language ceases to exist there will be no Irish nation. And that would be a great loss, for it is the Irish nation that bestowed mediæval learning upon Europe. It is the Irish nation that possesses the most wonderful mediæval literature, and the Irish language is the most interesting language in Europe. I am a Dane, and I should be sorry if the nation that was once our teacher should cease to exist, for I am convinced that if Irishmen continue their national existence they will contribute largely to human civilization."

A SUMMARY OF THE WORK.

"We found Ireland imitation-English; we are leaving it genuine Irish," is the way in which Dr. Hyde sums up the work being done by the league. And concerning the advance made in Ireland by the Gaelic League since the Irish in this country were last asked to help the movement, he said:

"Five years ago the principle of bilingual education, which the Gaelic League has been advocating from the first, was unknown in practice. To-day there are 181 schools in Ireland in which the whole course of study is conducted through the medium of the national language, as well as in English, and the whole number of primary schools in which Irish is taught as an ordinary or extra subject is 3,060, out of a total of more than eight thousand in all Ireland.

"More than all we pride ourselves on the establishment of six Irish summer colleges and two winter colleges, where teaching is conducted entirely in the national language, and at which the attendance this year was not less than twelve hundred grown students, at least one-half of whom are themselves teachers.

"But the climax and highest point to which Irish Ireland has yet risen was when the senate of the new National University, in response to the expressed wishes of nearly every representative body in Ireland, passed a resolution by a generous majority that a knowledge of the Irish language should be, after the next two years, an essential subject for matriculation, while during the next two years all who did not take it up as one of their subjects at entrance must attend lectures in it."

EDWARD R. PADGETT.

FACT AND FANCY.

The fire of genius won't make the pot boil.

Of all queer children those who ask questions are the querist.

Votes resemble dough in that women need them.

Sailors are perhaps called tars on account of the pitching of the ship.